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C O N T E N T S

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SOMALIA: Army commander said to be plotting against President. (Page 9)

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SOMALIA: Army commander and defense minister Samantar reportedly is plotting a move against President Siad sometime before January.

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[redacted] Samantar, who has received some military training in the Soviet Union, is concerned that Soviet influence in Somalia may decline as the military government establishes closer ties with Communist China. After Somali military leaders seized power from a pro-Western civilian government in October 1969, the Soviet position improved substantially. Moscow, however, granted only limited aid and economic concessions to the Somalis. In mid-1971 Somalia signed an agreement with Peking which provides for a sizable amount of economic aid and the introduction of Chinese technicians, scheduled to begin arriving early next year.

Samantar's influence has expanded dramatically over the past year during which he has been named defense minister and one of the three vice presidents of the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC). Recently, however, the general, once considered a supporter of the President, has been linked to an allegedly anti-Siad group on the SRC. Samantar's promotions could have been an attempt by Siad to head off any possibility of Samantar moving into leadership of an opposition faction.

Should Samantar choose to move against the government, his chances for success would be limited by his poor tribal connections and uncertain support in the army's officer corps. Moreover, Siad, himself a former army commander, apparently retains the loyalty of important army elements and tightly controls the national security service.

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